

our power, our strength, our example, our ability to change, our fidelity to our ideals, I am telling you, there are no cynics about this country beyond our borders. And there should be no cynics about this country within our borders. We are going in the right direction. We are a great country. We can solve our problems.

But we have to stand up to the forces that would divide us. We have to stand up to the forces that would take us back. And we've got to stand up for ourselves. No matter what I do, I cannot take you to the polling place on Tuesday. You've got to go there yourselves. You are the bosses in this country, and I am your hired public servant. You are in control. And on Tuesday, you will be in control. And you will be in control whether you vote or don't. Because if you don't vote, that's a decision, too.

Now, I'm telling you folks, all these people that are trying to divide us by race, by region, by religion; all these people that are trying to throw a big blanket over what we've done the

last 21 months and hope nobody notices it until it's too late; all these people who are pushing us to political extremes to grab power—we have to stand up, and we have to say, “We tried that, and it got us in a lot of trouble. And we just started 21 months ago in a new direction. And if it's all the same to you, we'll keep going forward with our face toward the Sun, with the wind at our back. We will not turn back. No, no, we're going forward, every one of us, and we're going to do it together.”

God bless you. We can do it. I need your help. They need your help. Let's do it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:38 p.m. at the Antioch Baptist Church. In his remarks, he referred to saxophonist Sam Stephenson; Rev. Marvin McMickle, pastor, Antioch Baptist church; Peter Jones, candidate for Ohio Lieutenant Governor; and insurance executive Arnold Pinkney, coordinator for the school levy bond issue.

Interview with Ed Gordon of Black Entertainment Television November 2, 1994

Midterm Elections

Mr. Gordon. Hello everyone, I'm Ed Gordon. Welcome to the Roosevelt Room in the White House. Today, a group of African-Americans from across the country will meet face-to-face with President Bill Clinton. They will be discussing the President's domestic policy agenda as it concerns the black community.

Mr. President, thanks for coming in. First, I get my crack at you, before we turn it over to these folks. Let me ask you, with less than now a week away from the elections, you've been on the stump for the last week and a half and will leave us today and continue—and I suspect right down to the last days.

One of the things that we are hearing, as I travel across the country and we get calls into Black Entertainment Television, is a concern of African-Americans that perhaps, particularly with what's on the line, Democrats haven't been reaching out to blacks as they hoped. What would your thought be on that?

The President. Well, I can't speak about what the local candidates are doing, because it may

differ from State to State. But I can say for sure that nationally we have continued to do that. The Democratic Party has had a massive outreach program. Reverend Jackson is traveling all around the country now, going to rallies every day, in a way that we have coordinated between my schedule, the Vice President, and his. We're all trying to hit the right places.

And we've got a real story to tell about what we've done here in the last 2 years, and about what's at stake in this election. And the Republican candidates are far—on balance, tend to be far more extreme right-wingers than they have been in the past, tend to be people who say that anything the Government does is evil and bad. And there's a lot on the line in this election.

We have made—this country is in better shape than it was 21 months ago. It's economically in better shape. We are moving here to try to address some of the concerns that working families have that especially impact the African-American community in America. So, I'm hoping that in the last 7 days we will really get

a lot of energy out there and the voter turnout will go up, because I think this election—so many of these elections are so close, they are going to be determined by which side turns out. That's really what's going to turn it, who shows up to vote.

In 1992 we had an astronomical turnout. Every time I would go to a State, I look at the voting records from '92 and I see that there are whole States or congressional districts where President Bush, for example, in winning the election in 1988, with 54 percent of the vote, got exactly the same vote in 1992 in that congressional district, didn't lose any votes. But there were so many more votes—for me, for Mr. Perot—the American people got involved.

And then for 2 years, you know, they get told every night on the sort of mainstream media, and then by a lot of the kind of attack radio folk, how bad things are up here, and people get their enthusiasm dampened. But there's a lot going on here; there's a lot going on that relates to people out in the heartland. And that's got to be our message this last week.

Mr. Gordon. Let's see if I can pick up on something that you suggested. Even Reverend Jackson has said, though, that he doesn't feel that he's being utilized to his full potential in terms of getting upwards to, I think it is now, 8 million unregistered black voters. And the fact is, in '92 you did get a whole lot of votes, particularly from the African-American community. And there is a question as to whether or not this country, certainly as you suggested, the Republican Party, and even now a thought of the Democratic Party—and I know you've been fighting this for a long time—moving to the right. And blacks are the only group that are staying to the left and staying, if we can put the tag on it, liberal.

The President. I basically don't agree, though, with that formulation of it. First of all, let me say that in this year, most of the money we raised we gave to the candidates for the first time. Next year, I think we'll have to go back and do a lot more voter registration. Mayor Archer, in Detroit—I was with him yesterday. They have registered 50,000 more people in Detroit. They have sent out 50,000 absentee ballots; they've already gotten 30,000 back. So, a lot of our leaders at the grassroots level, the mayors especially, are working hard on this. Next year, I think we'll have to do more.

But what I think we've got to do is, the Democrats need to stay with our base voters. They need to stay with African-Americans; they need to stay with Hispanics; they need to stay with the blue-collar white voters; they need to stay with the small business people—the kind of people that have always been for us. And we need to do it.

And we can still appeal to the undecided voters, to the people who voted for Perot, because there is a way to invest more in our children, in our economy, in our inner cities, and still cut the size of Government, be tough on crime, and have a strong foreign policy. And what we've got to do is to get that message out and then try to get people to have enough faith in us to keep going in this direction until it affects their lives.

One of the reasons that the sitting President's party almost always loses seats in Congress at midterm—if you look in the whole 20th century, there has only been one election, Franklin Roosevelt in 1934, when the sitting President's party did not lose seats in at least one house of Congress—only one. Why? Because people are full of hope at the election and then at midterm, even if the President has accomplished a great deal, they may not have felt it in their own lives.

Mr. Gordon. But you sit with the possibility of losing, at this point, both Houses. You also—you mentioned Detroit—

The President. Let me just say this. If we had the average losses, just since World War II—just the average losses—we would come close to that. So, we're trying to beat the average, even though the Democrats have a lot more seats up than the Republicans do in the Senate. That's just bad luck of the draw. Every year a third of the seats come up, and you have no way of knowing whether there are going to be more Democratic or more Republican.

Mr. Gordon. Even with that math—new math, if you will—you're still going to face an uphill battle. You mentioned Detroit and the gains that you have and Dennis Archer bringing in new voters. But you face a big hill in Michigan. It looks like you're not going to regain—if polls are to believe—the Governor's seat, and there are close races all around. When you look at that and you understand that there is not really the zeal that you've seen from the African-American community before, what do you put that to? What do you account that to?

The President. Well, first of all, if you look at Michigan, the Governor is running for his second term in a good economy. So, most Governors running for their second term in a good economy get reelected. I think if you look at it, there has been for the last 2 years an overwhelming—

Mr. Gordon. A good economy across the State—let me interrupt you—

The President. Across the Nation—it's across the Nation, but it's also in the State.

Mr. Gordon. In the State. But Detroit is still suffering though—

The President. Absolutely.

Mr. Gordon. Though the car companies have made a comeback, Detroit is still suffering.

The President. It is. But as Mayor Archer always tells people, we need to keep doing what's working. We've got 88,000 more jobs in Michigan than we had when I took office, and in the previous 4 years Michigan lost 8,300. So that's the message I've been trying to hammer home in Michigan and the message that I hope will carry Bob Carr to the Senate seat there. And it really is a function of how many people vote in Detroit.

But if you look at it, I mean, African-Americans watch the same news at night that ordinary Americans do. If there is an overwhelming bias in what they see—based on conflict, failure, process, politics, and negativism, as opposed to just giving people the facts about what's going on—then you can't expect people to vote on what they don't know.

The truth is, as Time magazine said last week—they put a chart up, and they said, since World War II there have only been three times, three 2-year periods, when the Congress has given the President more than 80 percent of what the President asked for: President Eisenhower's first 2 years, President Johnson's first 2 years, and this last 2 years. In other words, no other President since World War II, except Eisenhower and Johnson, has had more than 80 percent of the initiative approved 2 years in a row by Congress.

The voters don't know that because that's not the message they get. A lot of people don't know about the family and medical leave law, about tax cuts for 15 million working Americans on low incomes with children, about immunizing all the kids in this country under the age of 2 by 1996, about the expansion in the Head Start program, about the empowerment zones

for inner cities, about a lot of this stuff. So, what I've got to do in the last week here is get out and talk about what's been done and try to rev people up.

Mr. Gordon. I want to do that. But one of the reasons that they perhaps don't know—and I agree and even your critics are suggesting that maybe you have not been given the praise you deserve for some things that you've brought to the table. But many of those bills and acts don't come in immediately, and it takes time to disseminate that money. And some of them are going to be disseminated by a totally different House and Senate, at this point, which could indeed determine where those monies go.

The President. But you know—all right—let's talk about that. The President is not the only person in this world who has responsibilities.

Mr. Gordon. Oh, absolutely.

The President. Ultimate responsibility in the United States resides with the citizens. And you know, you've got all these extreme Republicans out there, promising the Moon, telling everybody they're going to take them back to the eighties, of trickle-down Reaganomics and promising tax cuts and spending increases and balanced budgets, all this ridiculous stuff. At some point, the American people have to assume the responsibility of the future of their country. They are ultimately responsible for how they vote and whether they vote. And you know, if they're not getting the straight shot from the media, they have to figure out how else to get their information. And I have to do that.

The media comes and goes in trends. They tend to be more negative when Congress is in session and less negative when they're not, even when they're not trying to be, just because it's more interesting to cover the fights, the conflicts, the processes than some success.

So somebody needs to say to the voters in this next week—that's what I'm trying to do—look, you are the bosses, and you decide, and the outcome is yours.

[At this point, BET took a commercial break.]

Administration Accomplishments

Mr. Gordon. Continuing our discussion with President Bill Clinton about issues that concern and are germane to the African-American community, one of the things that you said before we went to break was the idea that the public needs to know who to vote for and what's going

to be done for them. One of the things that we continue to read, and as I travel the country I talk to people from Los Angeles to New York, that it really doesn't matter if a Democrat is in the White House or a Republican is in the White House nowadays, particularly for African-Americans, because—and I know you bristle at this—but some have joked you've been the best Republican President for the last 20 years.

The President. Well, they're wrong. They're wrong. It matters that we've got more than twice as many African-Americans in the Cabinet and in high Government positions than any President in history. It matters that, in 2 years, I appointed more than twice as many African-Americans to the Federal bench, who will be making decisions in court case after court case after court case, for decades. I appointed more than twice as many African-Americans to the bench than Presidents Reagan, Carter, and Bush combined. That makes a difference.

It matters whether we enforce the Voting Rights Act. It matters whether we enforce the antidiscrimination provisions. It matters whether we pass family and medical leave for working people so they can have some time off without getting fired when their babies are born or their parents are dead, or sick. And the past President vetoed it twice. I got it through the Congress, and I signed it. These things matter.

It matters whether you've got 4.6 million new jobs or you're losing jobs. It matters that in 1994 we've got more high-wage jobs coming into this economy than in the previous 5 years combined. And that's what I'm telling you.

The citizens of this country get sucker-punched over and over and over again by people who make money peddling cynicism. And if they fall for it, they cannot blame the President or the Congress. The people are the bosses in this country, and it's time they stopped blaming everybody else for what they don't know and going out there and finding out what are the facts, what are the differences, and voting on it. They cannot blame other people when they make statements like that which are foolish.

Now, I think the Republicans ought to think I'm a good Republican President. Why? Because we're taking the Federal Government to its smallest size since Kennedy; we're reducing the deficit for 3 years in a row for the first time since Truman; we passed a tough crime bill that was also smart; and we've got a strong economy and a strong foreign policy. If I were a

Republican, they would be building a statue to me and urging everybody to vote for my Members of Congress, instead of what they're doing. But because we live in an age where if you can buy your way onto the airwaves, you can say anything, you don't have to be held accountable, they are making a race out of this.

Mr. Gordon. Let me try this. Because every time—

The President. But for you to say it doesn't make any difference is just wrong.

Mr. Gordon. I didn't say this, and every time I say that and put it on the table, I wonder if I'm going to get my invitation to the Christmas party. [Laughter]

The President. No, but I gave you the facts.

Mr. Gordon. Let me try this. When you see this zeal, that obviously this upsets you—

The President. Well, it's just false.

Mr. Gordon. —a lot of African-Americans are looking at what is coming up with the Supreme Court. We're looking at race-based solution cases that they're finding with the construction companies. We saw the University of Maryland was struck down for black scholarships recently with the Federal Appeals Court and whether or not that's going to send a signal across the Nation.

The President. We stood up for minority-based scholarships.

Mr. Gordon. But people want—

The President. It matters who's the President. Some do, some don't.

Mr. Gordon. Well, let's look at that. Did you stand up—the question would be, did you stand up loud enough?

The President. Well, all I know is, no President in history—ever—has had anything that approaches the record I do on empowering African-Americans and involving them in doing things.

Mr. Gordon. Are you concerned with what you see, when you see these things falling by the wayside?

The President. Sure. But let me ask you something. Let's look at this, and let's go back to whether it makes a difference or not. People have got to make up their mind—another thing they have to make up their mind about is how much difference in what timeframe can any person make in the White House.

The social problems that are afflicting a lot of our communities—the breakdown of the families, the communities, the loss of jobs, the rise

of crime and violence—this stuff has been developing for 30 years. The Republicans have been in office 20 of the last 26 years, and for the last 12 years. I have been here 21 months. We are moving in the right direction. That's my argument. And I think it's a pretty compelling argument.

Mr. Gordon. You knew coming in, though, that you were going to have to run a quick race and people weren't going to sit and give you the time that perhaps you needed.

The President. No, I knew coming in that people who fight for change in this country always wind up getting in trouble, because the people who are against you fight you like crazy and the people that are for you are always tentative until they feel the results. So when you're trying to fight for change, you've got to be willing to be unpopular to be responsible.

Racial Issues

Mr. Gordon. Should African-Americans be concerned with what they see? If you look at headlines, you look at the book "The Bell Curve" and what's being said, I mean, you look at—the USA Today today suggested that there are all of these undertones of racial code words being used with the elections. It seems to me that just as a moral leadership issue, should you step up and suggest to this country, we've got to start dealing with race and get it out on the table? We don't like to talk about it.

The President. Well, I think we should. I think that I should all the time. Last night I was in Cleveland, and I was standing in an African-American church, Antioch Baptist Church, and I talked about what the Republican House leader, Mr. Gingrich, said. He said they wanted to make me look like the enemy of normal Americans, and the only safe place I could speak was to a black audience in America. And I said that this country would be a lot better off if every public official felt as comfortable in that church as I did.

Every time I give a speech, I talk about the strength of our diversity, that one of the best things about what we did in Haiti was that America is the only country that could have gone to Haiti and produced a couple of hundred Haitian-American soldiers that could be down there speaking Creole to the people of Haiti as we prepared the way for President Aristide to come back.

I think a lot of people, a lot of white voters, have been alienated by the problems in their own life and the inability of the Government to make a difference in their own life. And so, extreme rightwing forces are telling them it's all because the Government tried too hard to help the minorities. They're wrong; the minorities are not helped very much either.

And what I've got to tell the majority population in this country is that our diversity is a source of strength. We're either going forward together or we're going to fall behind together. And this whole business that we should be divided by race is crazy. It helps the Republicans in election years, but it's a lousy way to run the country.

Mr. Gordon. Address the criticism for me, as you move toward election time—because it doesn't just speak to you as a person, it speaks to politicians in general—that the fact that you feel comfortable in a black church is all well and good, yet some of the rhetoric that you may give speaks to some of the same code words that they're concerned about: reform welfare as we know it. Many people suggest that the crime bill was all well and good, but it wasn't remedy-based.

The President. I believe, first of all—let me answer both those things.

Mr. Gordon. Please do.

The President. First of all, I believe almost 90 percent of the people in the African-American community are dissatisfied with the welfare system. I believe nearly every welfare recipient, white or black—and there's still more white people on welfare than black people in America—is dissatisfied.

Mr. Gordon. In sheer numbers.

The President. Yes. I think they're dissatisfied with the welfare system. My proposal to change welfare as we know it is not punitive, it's positive. It gives people a chance to move to independence, and it removes all the disincentives to move to independence.

Mr. Gordon. But you understand what I'm saying by the code word—

The President. It may be—

Mr. Gordon. —that there's a black face on welfare in this country.

The President. But to me the issue is, there ought to be—I think opportunity ought to have a black face, a brown face, a yellow face, as well as a white face. That's the way I look at this welfare issue.

On the crime bill, if you'll remember—all the big battles on the crime bill were on the prevention programs, on the positive programs, where the Democrats stuck up for them and the Republicans attacked them viciously and for pure political benefit. Some of those prevention programs had been sponsored and put into the bill by Republican Members of Congress. And then as soon as we got close to the election, they turned like a dog in the night on that bill and started talking about how it was just a pork bill and just a giveaway and how midnight basketball was terrible. They did that. It was the Democrats that stood for the prevention programs, for giving our kids something to say yes to, for some remedy-based solutions, to use your phrase, in that crime bill—again showing that it makes a big difference who is in and who is not. That crime bill gives communities the tools to make a difference in young people's lives, if they will use it.

Social Security

[Following a commercial break, Mr. Gordon introduced a senior citizen from Miami, FL, who asked about Social Security.]

The President. Social Security is not going to be cut, and the cost-of-living increase will go through. The problem is that the Republicans say if they get control of Congress, they're going to give a big tax increase to wealthy people, small tax increase to other working people, increase defense spending, and balance the budget. The only way they can do that is to cut everything else 20 percent across the board, including Social Security. It would be a disaster—the \$2,000 cut in Social Security, \$1,800 cut in Medicare, on average, for every citizen in America. If they say they won't do that, then what they're telling us is they're going to do right what they did in the 1980's—they're going to explode the deficit, send our jobs overseas, and put our economy in the ditch.

So what we've been pointing out is, you can't go to the voters and make all these wild promises, just promise people anything, promise we're going to cut taxes, increase spending, and balance the budget. The only way to do that is to cut Social Security. So what I've been saying is that it's—a good reason to vote for the Democrats in this election is that we know that we have to keep Social Security sound, we have to keep it healthy, but the truth is that

Social Security costs, as a percentage of our national income, are the same today as they were 20 years ago. Our problem with the Federal deficit is the exploding cost of health care, not Social Security. And it's a mistake to take it out of Social Security and scare a lot of the elderly people in the country, just to make promises to other voters.

Discrimination

[Mr. Gordon introduced a business executive from Detroit, MI, who questioned the Nation's progress, citing the example of an African-American executive who was denied membership in a Michigan country club that purportedly had tax exempt status as a not-for-profit organization.]

The President. I don't approve of that. If they discriminated against him based on his race, I don't approve of it, and I don't think they ought to get tax exemptions. I guess they've probably got no—they must have gotten some local tax exemptions. I don't imagine they get Federal tax exemptions. If they do, we could certainly look into it. It doesn't sound right to me.

Mr. Gordon. Let me piggy-back off that. That's one case across the country. We know that there are more and more cases that are coming to light in terms of discrimination and the problem with race in this country. What can you do from the Federal level, from your bully pulpit to help eradicate the problems that many Africans are starting to see more overtly today?

The President. Well, first of all, I think we have to talk about them more. We cannot let it become fashionable to discriminate. What I'd like to say—and I think one of the things that African-American business and professional people I think ought to do, is to challenge other Americans, to tell them to their face what's on their mind, to engage people.

You know, I think you've got a lot of people—a lot of white people still have no black friends. It's a great loss in this country, I mean, we live—Los Angeles County has people from 150-plus different racial and ethnic groups—it is a travesty. When people discriminate against other people based on the color of their skin or their religion, it's basically because they're ignorant, afraid and under a misapprehension of the facts. If whites and blacks talked together more often, spent more time together, they would be sur-

prised to find out how much they have in common.

And I think that the President has a responsibility to constantly speak out against this, and I try to do it; perhaps I should do it more. But I also think that people should be confronted when they have these attitudes. There's no place—the kind of thing that you just told me about—it's 1994; there's no excuse for that in this country.

Mr. Gordon. Let me go to Eric Moore, who is from Los Angeles, a police officer. Can we get you today to pledge that you will speak out publicly more against the racial problems that are happening in this country?

The President. Oh, absolutely. You know, keep in mind—if you look at what Henry Cisneros did in Vidor, Texas, with that housing project, what we did in the Denny's case where the people were discriminated against there, the law enforcement officials at Denny's, we have taken a strong stand. But I think a lot of it is, people need to say this. And when I see these polls, like you mentioned this poll today where 51 percent of white citizens in America allegedly say there's too much effort to give special consideration to black Americans—I would challenge every single one of those people to seek out a hard-working African-American and have a personal conversation with them about it. I think there is still too little honest dialog in this country.

Opportunities for Youth

[*Mr. Moore asked about presenting alternatives to dealing drugs for troubled youth.*]

The President. First, I think that you have to tell them the truth, which is that if you don't sell dope, you won't make as much money in the short run. But if you'll stay in school, obey the law, get an education, the chances are better than 9 in 10 that you'll get a decent job and you'll have a chance to have a good life.

I think what happens is, so many of these kids are living in neighborhoods where they don't see people like them who have regular jobs, who put in 40-hour weeks, who raise children, who take care of them, that they cannot imagine that if they paid the price of time, if they stayed in school 12 years—and then they went to college for 4 years, that they would be rewarded. But I think you've also got to tell them the truth. If you're 16 years old, you

can make a lot more money selling dope than you can in school, but you're going to wind up dead earlier; you're going to have a miserable life, and it's not going to work out.

Let me just make one other comment. You know more about this than I do because of the way you live your life. And I think that one answer is for more people like you to be out there. See, I've been telling everybody that this 100,000 police in the crime bill, the 20 percent increase in police on the street, the main benefit of this will be in preventing crime in the first place. Because if we put more people like you in uniform out there in the neighborhoods, who understand what the roots of this problem are, they will be better role models, and they will reduce crime by reaching children. That's what I believe.

But yes, you know, I can't tell a kid—if you're a runner at the age of 10 you're going to make more money than if you're in the 5th grade. But your life is going to be better over the long run if you do the right thing. And I think what I need to do is to try to make sure—this is one of the reasons I, by the way, trying to bring in these empowerment zones and community development banks in the inner cities—is so that people in these neighborhoods, these kids, can see people going to work every day and can image how their life could be different.

Employment and Welfare Reform

[*Mr. Gordon introduced a New York community activist who expressed concern about employment opportunities for welfare recipients and youth. Mr. Gordon then commented that many young people with college degrees could not find jobs.*]

The President. That's right. But there are far fewer of them now than there were 21 months ago. There are more jobs now than there were then. That's an objective fact.

Let me just say this. One of the things that I have challenged the Congress about is that you cannot cut someone off, you can't tell somebody they've got to go to work unless there is work for them to do. And we are trying all kinds of experiments now. I just approved, for example, what's called a waiver—and for our audience, let me—a Federal waiver means that we let you out of certain Federal rules to see if you can find a better way to solve a problem. I approved a waiver for Oregon where they are

able to give the welfare checks of people who wish to go to work—they're saying, "I want to go to work"—they can give the welfare checks to the employers as a wage supplement to encourage employers to expand hiring. Now, the employers can't lay anybody off. They can't put people out of work. But if they're willing to expand hiring, we'll supplement their wage.

And I think what Oregon will find, if they can do it fairly, is that most people on welfare want to go to work. You know that; you live in the community. And I don't think we can have a welfare reform program which cut people off of welfare unless there is a job for them to go to if they have little children, because you don't want these kids suffering.

Education

[Mr. Gordon introduced a Memphis, TN, student who questioned administration funding priorities and requested more money for historically and predominantly black colleges and universities.]

The President. We are trying—what this administration has tried to do is, while we've reduced overall spending, we've tried to actually invest more money in education, starting with expanding the Head Start program.

I was in Michigan yesterday to talk about what we've done with college loans, and we had a lot of minority students there, talking about—because Michigan is in the forefront of implementing our college loan reform plan. Under our new plan, young people all across America can borrow money to go to college at lower cost than ever before, and now they can pay it back as a percentage of their income, so they need never worry about their ability to pay it back. So if you decide to be a police officer instead of a stockbroker, your repayment schedule is a function of your income and your ability to pay. So I think you will see the problem of minorities not going to or not staying in college—I think you'll see that begin to turn around.

Now, in the crime bill, one of the things we did which I am proud of is we made church groups and community groups eligible to get that prevention money so that they can go out and do the right things. There's not a lot of Federal rules and regulations.

We also made, in our national service program, community groups eligible to get young people to work in national service. We pay

them, and then—we pay most of the costs—and then we pay them a college scholarship; we give them whatever they'd get doing the GI bill. So we're trying to do some things that specifically give more opportunity to young people out there.

Minority Business

[Following a commercial break, Mr. Gordon introduced Dr. Emma Chappel, founder and president, United Bank of Philadelphia, who suggested that the administration perform equity audits to evaluate Federal departments and agencies on how much business was given to the African-American community.]

The President. I will look into that. You know, in September—

Q. By the way, both Governor candidates in Pennsylvania have already committed to doing this. They like the idea.

The President. It's an interesting idea. In September I issued another Executive order to all my agencies on these issues, because I was afraid that a lot of these departments were not implementing the laws that were on the books, that have been on the books through Republican and Democratic Presidents alike. And I think you're right. I will look into this, and I'll get back to you on it.

Q. And it takes an Executive order. Thank you very much.

Education

[Mr. Gordon introduced a Richmond, VA, public school teacher who asked about programs to assist students at risk.]

The President. First of all, I just signed a few weeks ago, a couple of weeks ago, the elementary and secondary education act, which changed rather dramatically the way we give Federal money to school districts. And there are a lot of things that it did, but it did three things that may relate to your concerns.

First, the bill now says that in seeking to serve educationally disadvantaged kids, that the teachers and the principals at the local school can decide how best to serve them. They don't have to be served by Federal rules and regulations. They don't have to be separated out in a class. You can decide what the best way is to do it.

Secondly, there is a special emphasis in this bill on the whole idea of the involvement of

parents in education and what has to be done to help the parents do a better job with the students, which I think is important.

The third thing it does is to encourage local schools—not the Federal Government, local schools—to decide what basic values of citizenship they want to teach the children, to articulate them, to write them down, and then to teach them, instead of feeling that they can't do that, that they can't build character in their students.

But I'd be curious to know—and maybe we don't have time on this program—but I'd be curious to know what things you think we could do to help the parents do a better job who would like to do a better job and aren't sure that they, themselves, know enough to do what they ought to be doing.

Mr. Gordon. If I can step in, perhaps we can get someone in your education office that Sheila can speak with, and we'll do that before you leave.

The President. I think that's a good idea.

Antidrug Efforts

[*Mr. Gordon introduced a Cleveland, OH, pastor who asked about efforts to stop drug importers.*]

The President. We just had a very large sting operation in the last couple of weeks that our Federal authorities pulled off and that I'm very proud of. We are working hard now to try to stop these drugs at the source. Lee Brown is spending a lot of his time going to countries where these drugs—where they start, where they start growing the coca, where they start raising the opium that becomes heroin. And we believe that we have to place a much greater emphasis on trying to get the drugs at the source, get the people that are bringing them into the country. And we spent a lot of time with Louis Freeh, our FBI Director, working on international cooperation against organized crime, working on money-laundering, working on tracing this money.

The way to get these big guys is to follow the money, because you never see the drugs until you see them on the street. I mean, once in a while, you'll see we'll break in a warehouse or something but—and we work on that, we do that. And it's good when we can do it, but we're really working hard now on international cooperation, going to the source and tracing the

money. And I think that you will be able to demonstrate to the people in your community, after we've had time to really pursue this strategy, that we have been at least as tough on those folks as we have on the folks in the street.

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—share with that. The other thing is that those people—*

Mr. Gordon. Very quickly, Pastor.

Q. *—yes—usually have the money to buy the kind of lawyers that they need to get off. And something needs to be done to stop that as well, because the individuals who end up getting arrested, they get court-appointed lawyers.*

Mr. Gordon. Let's go to Christopher Coleman now, who is a law student at Howard University and from Los Angeles, California.

The President. Good for you.

Democratic Party

[*Mr. Coleman, 1992 Clinton-Gore college campaign manager in DC, asked how to keep young voters in the Democratic Party.*]

The President. I think you have to say, first of all, that the Republicans, give them their due, they are great talkers and they're great at playing on people's fears and reservations and anxieties and cynicism. They're good at it. It's how they stayed in all these years they held the Presidency, by convincing people that Democrats were alien to their values and their interests. But we're doers. We've begun to make the Government work for ordinary people. We've begun to do something to empower people through education. We've begun to make the economy work again with more jobs, and we've begun to make the world a safer place and a more prosperous place for Americans to work in. And we're trying to do it in ways that keep all the American people together across racial and regional and income, religious lines, that we basically are working to get the 21st century to be an American century, that all young people will have the best years this country ever had. They are working to prey on people's fears and anxieties and to tell them that everything their Government does is bad and wrong. And that's just not true. I think that's what you have to say.

If you really think about—well, let me close with this: You look at what the United States has done in Haiti, how we helped South Africa conduct an election, how we stood up to Sad-

dam Hussein recently in the Persian Gulf, how we've helped to get peace in the Middle East. Other people in the world look to us for support, from Northern Ireland to southern Africa, because they think this is a great country.

There is no room for the sort of cynicism that we sometimes feel about our own country. We've got a lot of serious problems; we just need to get about the business of solving them and doing it together. And we can best do that within a party that is committed to opportunity for everybody and challenging everybody to be responsible instead of just telling them what they want to hear. That's the way to get to the future.

The Economy

Mr. Gordon. Let me see if I can do this as we close, because the words that became so famous during your run were "It's the economy, stupid." Let me see if I can move back—and I saw Mr. Panetta at the door, so I don't know if I'm in trouble at this point or not, but let me go on and move to it.

I've got a study here, or a poll, that the University of Chicago took most recently. And it says here, 75 percent of the blacks that they polled feel that the American legal system, economic system, and American society in general has not been and is not fair to them, which may indeed speak to the problems that Republicans and Democrats are getting, or having to get African Americans to the polls.

Most of it is an economic question for everyone in this country, outside of the racial problems that minorities have. What do you say—we talked about midnight basketball, we talked about some other preventative measures that you'd put in. But there are a lot of people out there who say, "I just cannot make it on what I'm being paid."

The President. That's something we haven't talked about yet, but I'm convinced that one of the reasons that people are not feeling really optimistic, even though the economy—the statistics show the economy is booming, is that a lot of people personally haven't felt it. That is, they may have a job, but they think they're never going to get a raise, they could lose their job; they're afraid they're losing their health care; they feel personally insecure because there are so many changes going on in this country. One of the things that's going to take us a few years to work through is how to make sure

that you get investment to areas where there isn't any investment, mostly inner cities and rural areas, and how do you give people a sense of security—even if they don't get to keep the same job they got, they'll get another one.

Mr. Gordon. How do you convince me that I get it when I'm still waiting on 40 acres and a mule? Even if the panacea comes through for you.

The President. That is a worldwide phenomenon. The global economy is changing so fast that people are going to have to redefine their security. That's why all these young people that are getting a good education, they'll always have a job, but that may be a different job than the one they used to have.

My big task is, first of all, to get as many jobs as I can back in the country; secondly, to get more good-paying jobs, not low-paying jobs; and thirdly, then, to get that investment into the inner cities and the isolated rural areas where the spirit of enterprise has not gone. And that's why you've got a lot of the problems that this police officer faces, that there aren't people working, bringing home a paycheck, and helping to build the kind of future that they need.

But I've been working at it for 21 months; we're better off than we were 21 months ago. I just haven't solved all of the problems yet. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Gordon. They're telling me from the booth—and I don't know how I'm going to do this—they want to know if any of you have another question. I know one of you do, so let me see if I can do this.

Why don't you very, very quickly—go ahead. You had your hand up first.

Employment

[A participant asked if the President would consider another economic stimulus package to address employment for youth.]

The President. What I think we need to do is to focus more on—what I hope we can do in the welfare reform bill is to focus more on how we can get jobs to young people. What I hope we can do more with the empowerment zone legislation—we just talked about that.

We're going to have to think about what are we going to do in 1995 to get more private sector jobs into places where they don't exist now. What difference does it make to you that the unemployment rate is 2.8 percent in Ne-

braska? It's important to me; I'm the President of all the American people; I'm proud we've got it down so low in Nebraska. But if it's 15 percent in your neighborhood, and if it's 50 percent among young people who aren't in school and do want to be at work, then those numbers mean nothing to you. So this country has never solved that problem, but we are trying some new and different approaches. And I'm convinced now that a lot of people in both parties and across racial lines understand that we've got to put work back into our young people's lives.

Cooperation With Congress

Mr. Gordon. How willing are you to go toe-to-toe with Bob Dole and the other Republicans who inevitably are going to fight some of those programs you're putting forth?

The President. Well, all I've been doing for 2 years is going toe-to-toe with them. [*Laughter*] The real question ought to be asked of them. They ought to be asked, "Aren't you willing to stop going toe-to-toe and start working in partnership with the President, and stop worrying about short-term political gains and start worrying about America?"

Mr. Gordon. Are you concerned that it's going to continue the partisan fighting that we've seen over the course of the years?

The President. The Republicans in this Congress were the most partisan by a nonpartisan analysis—they were more partisan this year and last year than ever before since people have been studying this, since World War II. I hope that they'll be better next time.

Q. Mr. President, you've got a lot of successes. What can you do to get your message out even more?

Mr. Gordon. With about 40 seconds to go, let's let him answer that.

The President. Well, one reason I do programs like this is to get the information out. Most Americans do not know, unless they've been personally affected by the college loan program, the family leave program, the immunization program. We just have to work harder to get those messages out. And next year, I'm going to devote an enormous amount of time to doing it.

Mr. Gordon. Well, Mr. President, we're to the point where just about rubber meets the road. We will see next week what happens.

The President. Thanks.

Mr. Gordon. We appreciate you joining us, as always.

The President. Good to see you.

NOTE: The interview began at 10:15 a.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Remarks to Senior Citizens in Pawtucket, Rhode Island

November 2, 1994

Thank you very much. Congressman Kennedy—has a nice ring to it, don't you think? [*Laughter*] We'll take pictures later, okay? And I'll go over here, and we'll shake hands and take pictures, have a big time.

Let me say how delighted I am to be here. I was told in my briefing this morning that I am the first President of the United States to visit Pawtucket since Andrew Jackson. And that's not all that inappropriate. I probably care more about average Americans than any President since Andrew Jackson.

I want you to know, Mr. Mayor, how delighted I am to be here in your wonderful city. I am delighted to be here in the Portuguese Social Club. And for the members of the na-

tional press traveling with us, we have over a million Portuguese-Americans, and most of them live in Rhode Island, in Massachusetts, and in California. And I'm glad to be here in this community and in this club today.

I'm glad to be here with Patrick Kennedy. You know, he's got a shade of Irish luck. [*Laughter*] Wouldn't you love to be running for Congress against a person named Vigilante? [*Laughter*] I mean, especially in this election year with these issues. I'm glad to be here with Myrth York and with your senatorial candidate, Linda Kushner—I hope you will support them all—and my good friend Jack Reed, who has been a terrific Congressman for the State of Rhode Island.